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DEMOCRATIC

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Classic Quotation

"I have never had any trouble with serious newspapers, but Spiegel is the new Gestapo. It has thousands of files, and when you look at Germany's nazi past you will realise that pretty nearly everyone has something to hide. That makes blackmail possible. I was forced to do something about it."

Franz-Josef Strauss, late West German Minister of Defence, speaking in Tel Aviv on June 3rd. When West German newsmagazine "Spiegel" exposed Strauss's murky past and corrupt present, he framed the magazine on charges of treason.

New Afrika Korps?

A sixty-man group of West German soldiers landed in Nigeria at the beginning of June, it was announced in Bonn on June 6th. More officers and soldiers, who are nominally going to Africa to train the Nigerian forces, are expected to land shortly.

These West German forces are the first German soldiers to operate in Africa since Rommel's defeated Afrika Korps was rounded up in Tunisia in early 1943.

Following the announcement of this West German military penetration of Africa, the Social Democratic Party filed a question in the West German Parliament inquiring why this important step had been taken secretly. The question asked whether the arrangements had been made by Franz-Josef Strauss, recently retired Defence Minister, and whether Strauss had been arranging similar West German "military aid" when he visited Israel in early June.

It was revealed in Bonn at the same time that naval officers from Madagascar were training in West Germany.

Commenting on the disclosures, "Neues Deutschland", leading GDR newspaper, stated on June 7th:

"These facts must alarm both Africa and the rest of the world. In former times the German colonialists carried on their colonial policy with cannon-boats; now they pursue the same aims with 'development aid for the public services', the phrase which Bonn uses to describe this example of neo-colonialism."

Olympic Gambit Fails

A West Berlin attempt to drag politics into the Olympic Games arena collapsed on June 5th, when the International Olympic Committee, meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland, turned down a bid made by West Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt to stage the 1968 Olympics in Berlin.

In a move which was clearly propagandist, Mayor Brandt had asked the International Olympic Committee to name both halves of Berlin as the site for the 1968 Olympics. If the move had been actuated by an interest in sport, Mayor Brandt should obviously have consulted the National Olympic Committee of the GDR, which is responsible for sport in East Berlin, before making the move; in fact the question was not even raised inofficially at one of the regular meetings of the National Olympic Committees of the two German states.

Commenting on Brandt's move, the East Berlin newspaper "Neues Deutschland" stated on May 29th: "Willy Brandt's move is simply demagogic. It is in no way a genuine move to reach understanding in the sports field, but an attempt to carry the policies of Bonn into the Olympic arena."

One Farthing Damages

By the Editor

Traditionally, British courts of law award derisory damages of one farthing (the smallest British coin, now abolished) in libel cases where the man claiming damages is formally in the right but stands morally condemned.

Something very similar happened in a West German court at the end of May. Five West German generals, plus former Minister of Defence Strauss, had lodged charges against a left-wing politician who had described them as "mass murderers" because of their participation in Hitler's crimes. The court found Lorenz Knorr, the politician, guilty on a point of law, and fined him 300 marks – about £4 for each of the men who felt they had been libelled.

In its summing up, the court stated that Knorr "had gone too far" in the formulation which he had used. The term "mass-murderer" was unnecessarily strong when used to describe the co-guilt of the generals in war crimes, the court decided.

Reporting the trial, the semi-official West German newsagency DPA noted that the court, in its verdict, carefully avoided "giving any protection to the attacked generals".

Political observers pointed out that the court found itself in a very difficult position. In his defence, Knorr based himself on the fact that the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg had ruled that the top military leadership under Hitler had actively participated in the nazi crimes; if the court had passed a harsh sentence on him, this would have been a direct challenge to the Nuremberg Judges. If the court had acquitted him, this would have meant official cognisance of the fact that the top generals of the West German army are in fact war criminals.

Legal experts in West Germany were amazed that the generals concerned had the temerity to initiate legal action in the case; they said it could only be interpreted as another sign that Hitler's old generals felt so sure of their position that they did not realise that people in other countries still remembered the crimes which they committed. The men who took proceedings against Knorr, and who have now discovered that even a West German court values their reputations as "officers and gentlemen" at £4 per head, are General Adolf Heusinger, Chairman of the NATO Standing Military Committee; General Hans Speidel, Commander of NATO Land Forces in Central Europe; General Friedrich Foertsch, Inspector General of West German Forces; General Josef Kammhuber, recently-retired head of the West German Luftwaffe; and Admiral Friedrich Ruge, recently-retired head of the West German Navy.

The West German Court in the little town of Solingen ruled on May 29th that these men should not be described as "mass-murderers"; the word "murderer" would be quite sufficient, the court inferred.

These murderers run NATO, and are trying their damndest to get their hands on nuclear weapons.

W. Germans Jail Another Journalist

West German police arrested a leading GDR journalist on May 30th, charging him with "treasonable contacts". The arrested journalist, Georg Grasnik, is editor of the news service of Deutschlandsender Radio, most powerful GDR radio station. The vaguely-worded charges against him implied that he had been arrested because the radio station for which he works transmitted programmes popularising the peace policies of the German Democratic Republic.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the GDR protested officially on June 5th at the arrest of Mr Grasnick. The protest stated: "The Bonn Government is now claiming for itself the prerogative to imprison people because they have, in the German Democratic Republic, popularised the policy of our state, a policy which is in full accord with the basic principles of the United Nation Charter.

"This action against a prominent GDR journalist is an attack on those relations still existing between the two German states; it is part of a new campaign against any understanding, against any policy of good sense.

"The Government of the GDR demands the immediate release of Georg Grasnick. The continuation of the persecution in West Germany of citizens of the GDR forces the Government of the GDR to initiate counter-measures."

The arrest of Mr Grasnick was the culmination of a wave of arrests of journalists working for GDR newspapers and news agencies. A total of 49 journalists were arrested during May on assorted charges of espionage or "contact with the banned Communist Party". Most of the arrested men had to be released when police failed to establish a prima facie case against them, but charges are still pending, and many of the journalists concerned find it almost impossible to continue with their professional duties, since police sequestered their typewriters, cars and press cards.

Pressured Nazi-Fighter Quits

Dr Elmar Herterich, lone wolf fighter against the ex-nazi jurists and politicians who run his West German home town of Würzburg in Bavaria, has been forced to give up his struggle and send his wife and their two children to Hungary, which is her native land. Stones have been thrown into his windows and a steady stream of letters and telephone calls warned of violence against him or his family if he did not end his fight to rid the town of ex-nazi officials, who were active nazis before 1945 and who had combined to cover up their past records and run the town.

A series of slander and libel suits directed against Herterich, who is a psychologist at Würzburg University, culminated on May 24th in a ten week suspended prison sentence against him. The case, an appeal of a previous guilty verdict, was cited by Dr Herterich as additional proof that the local courts and administration were so united against him that he could achieve nothing more in future.

Before giving up, Herterich had achieved enough international attention to force out of office a local legal official who had been an SS official in occupied Norway and a state prosecutor who was involved during the war in obtaining the execution of anti-nazi Belgians, Dutchmen and Frenchmen.

GLOBKE — TRIAL PREVIEW

On July 8th, Hans Maria Globke, State Secretary in West German Chancellor Adenauer's office, will go on trial before the Supreme Court of the German Democratic Republic on charges of complicity in nazi crimes against humanity.

It is expected that Herr Globke will be tried in absentia, since it is obviously unlikely that the West German authorities will hand him over for trial, or that he will surrender to the court.

Details of the charges against Hans Globke, who is often regarded as the most powerful man in the West German state, had not been published when this issue of GERMAN REPORT went to press, but it is known that they will be mainly based on authentic nazi documents discovered in the past few years in captured Hitlerite archives in the GDR, Poland, Czechoslovakia and other countries. On this and the following pages we present some of the documentary evidence on Globke's career. Other documents, only recently discovered, will form part of the prosecution case at the trial, which is expected to last about two weeks.

January 30th 1933: Hitler became German Chancellor.

December 27th 1933: Globke was promoted to Chief Government Counsellor in the nazi Ministry of the Interior.

May 23rd 1934: Globke was appointed "Referent" (responsible specialist) for constitutional questions, birth, marriage and death registration, and changing of names.

September 15th 1935: Hitler promulgated the nazi racialist decrees know as the "Nuremberg Laws" at the Nazi Party Convention in Nuremberg. These laws formed the basis for the segregation of the Jews in Germany as second-class citizens, and were the first step to the gas-chambers. One of these laws, "The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour", banned marriages between Jews and "nationals of German or related blood"; invalidated all marriages contracted despite the ban; and prohibited extramarital relations between Jews and Germans.

"Chief Government Counsellor Dr Globke is undoubtedly one of the most capable and hard-working officials in my Ministry. He played an outstanding part in the drafting of the following laws: a. The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour of September 15th 1935..."

(Letter from Wilhelm Frick, nazi Minister of the Interior, to Hitler's Deputy Rudolf Hess on April 25th 1938)

Globke in 1941

1936: Globke wrote the semi-official legal commentary to the Nuremberg Racial Laws of 1935, together with his immediate boss in the Ministry of the Interior, SS General Wilhelm Stuckart, later convicted as a war criminal by an American military court. (For further details on Globke's legal commentary, turn to page 93.)

January 5th 1938: The Law for the Changing of Family and Given Names was passed. Under this law all Jews who did not already have one of a list of "Jewish" given names were compelled to add the name "Israel" or "Sara" to their names. Failure to use this additional name was punishable with a jail sentence. All such compulsory changes of names had to be registered with the police, which could thus compile a complete list of people to be deported later to the death camps.

"Dr Globke played an outstanding part in the drafting of the following laws:... d. The Law for the Changing of Family and Given Names of January 5th 1938..."

(Letter from Wilhelm Frick, nazi Minister of the Interior, to Hitler's Deputy Rudolf Hess on April 25th 1938)

Dr v. Stackelberg: Did you have anything to do with drafting the laws relating to change of names?
Globke: I was responsible for name changing and I worked out everything which had anything to do with changes of names.

(From "Trial of War Criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals, the Ministries Case (Case XI)" Official transcript, p. 15,465)

April 25th 1938: In his letter to Rudolf Hess, already quoted above, Minister Wilhelm Frick wrote:

"Because of his previous long membership in the Centrum Party, Dr Globke has not yet been proposed for promotion to the post of Ministerial Counsellor. But because of his proved loyalty and constant readiness for all work since the National Socialist Party came to power I believe it urgently necessary to promote him to Ministerial Counsellor in recognition of his very distinguished activity..."

May 17th 1938: Letter from Hitler's office:

"In the name of the Deputy to the Fuehrer I inform you that the promo-

Globke today

tion of Chief Government Counsellor Globke to the post of Ministerial Counsellor is approved. Heil Hitler."

September 17th 1938: Globke conferred in Berne with Swiss police authorities on ways of keeping Jews from fleeing from Germany to Switzerland. He spoke of the possibility of stamping the passes of Jews in some manner which would make them unmistakeable and thus permit their exclusion.

October 11th 1938: "By decision of the Herr Minister of the Interior... all German passports held by Jews will become invalid... The passports will become valid again when stamped ... with a special mark which shows the owners to be Jews... The mark is a red 'J', three centimetres in height, which is to be stamped in the upper left corner of page 1..."

(Details on this decision and Globke's part in it in "Das Dritte Reich und seine Diener" — by Léon Poliakov and Josef Wulf, Arani Publishers, West Berlin, 1956)

December 7th 1938: Dr Globke was awarded the "Medal in Memory of March 13th", the date of Hitler's occupation of Austria, in recognition of "special services" — transferring the Nuremberg Racial Laws and later anti-Semitic legislation to Austria. Minister of the Interior Frick, in his letter of April 25th 1938, quoted above, stated:

"Globke's cooperation in the reunification of Austria with the German Reich deserves recognition."

December 27th 1938: "Decree on the Introduction of the Nuremberg Laws into the Sudeten German Areas" was announced. Soon after, Globke received the "Medal in Memory of October 1st 1938" which was granted only to people with "special merits" in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia.

January 1939: A personnel list for inner-office use in the nazi Interior Ministry listed Globke as "Referent" (responsible official) or as "Co-Referent" for the following sections:

General Race Question.
Jewish Question, general themes.
Jewish Question, specific cases.
Position of Non-Jews with Alien Blood.
Law on Protection of the Blood, general and specific cases.

September 1939: After Hitler's declaration of war and the invasion of Poland, Globke was made responsible for the departmental sections on nationality questions in Danzig, Posen and West Prussia (all occupied areas).

January 29th 1940:

"To the Military Conscription Office Berlin-Schoeneberg...

Globke's personal file, source of much of the material presented on these pages

"...Dr Globke cannot be spared. He is in charge of the questions of nationality arising from the establishment of the Protectorate (in Czechoslovakia), the annexation of the eastern territories... and the re-settlement actions (expulsion of Poles from German-annexed territory and concentration of Polish Jews in ghettoes from which they were later sent to the death camps, the ed.) I must therefore view his civilian occupation as urgent and request that he not be conscripted for military service."

(Letter from Ministry of the Interior)

January 1941: Globke assumed the Interior Ministry posts responsible for "The New Order in the West: Denmark and Norway".

Mai 8th 1945: Nazi armies defeated. Germany capitulated, Dr Hans Globke's career was temporarily interrupted.

After a brief stay in a Roman Catholic monastery and an even briefer stay in the Ministerial Collecting Centre of Hessisch Lichtenau (an internment centre), Globke was able to get a foothold in public life again by offering to become a witness against his old superior in the Interior Ministry, Dr Wilhelm Stuckart, in the Nuremberg Trials. It was with Stuckart that he had written the commentary to the Nuremberg Laws. During this trial he stated:

Globke: "I knew that the Jews were being killed in large numbers, but I was always of the opinion that there were Jews who were still living in Germany, or in Theresienstadt, or elsewhere, in a sort of ghetto."

Question: (By defence counsel) "You thought that there were executions but not systematic extermination?"

Globke: "No, I did not want to say that. I am of the opinion, and I knew that at the time, that the extermination of the Jews was carried on systematically, but I did not know that it was supposed to apply to all Jews."

(Volume XIV, P. 642)

The guilty verdict against Stuckart, Globke's superior and collaborator, included the following words:

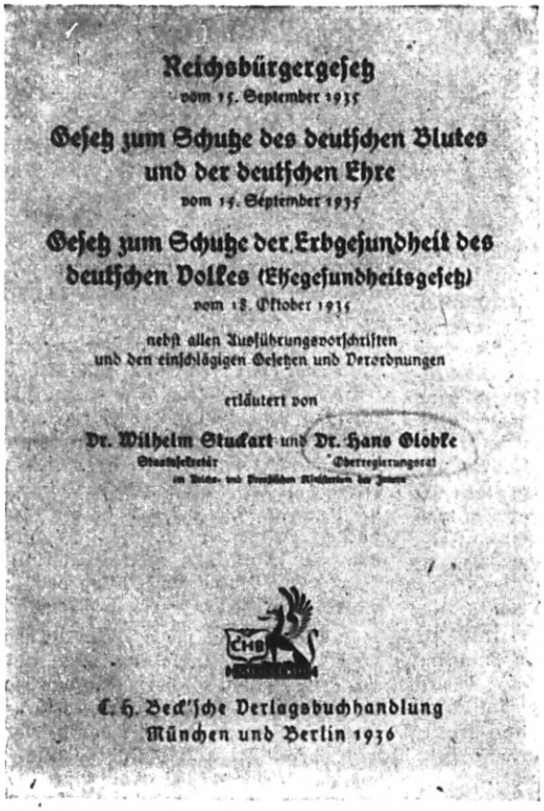
"The laws and decrees drafted or approved by Stuckart were without doubt an essential part of the programme aimed at almost completely annihilating the Jews, a programme which was achieved. If the commanders of the death camps... if the people who carried out the orders to evacuate the Jews to the east are put on trial, found guilty and punished... then certainly the men who took part in this campaign in their quiet offices in the Ministries by drafting the decrees and instructions for carrying it out are just as guilty."

But Globke escaped punishment, and soon started the climb back to a key post. In 1950 he became Adenauer's personnel chief, and in 1953 reached the pinnacle of his career as State Secretary in Adenauer's Chancellory.

This post he has held ever since, despite massive attacks both in West Germany and abroad.

Now at last, a court of law will try this man, who spent the nazi period drafting the laws and decrees under which Eichmann and his thousands of assistants conducted genocide.

GLOBKE'S SHAMEFUL BOOK


Reichsbürgergesetz
vom 15. September 1935
Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre
vom 15. September 1935
Gesetz zum Schutze der Erbgesundheit des deutschen Volkes (Ehegesundheitsgesetz)
vom 18. Oktober 1935
nebst allen Ausführungsvorschriften und den einschlägigen Gesetzen und Verordnungen
erläutert von
Dr. Wilhelm Stuckart und Dr. Hans Globke
Staatssekretär Oberregierungsrat
C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung
München und Berlin 1936

Reich citizen's law
of September 15th 1935

Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour
of September 15th 1935

Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People (Marriage Health Law)
of October 18th 1935

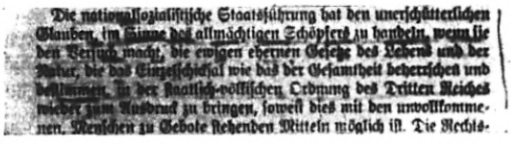
together with all regulations and the relevant laws and decrees

interpreted by

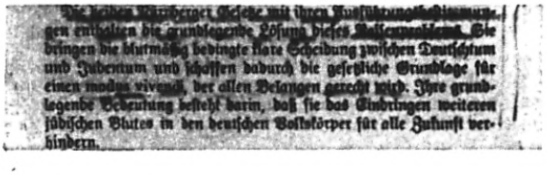
Dr Wilhelm Stuckart and Dr Hans Globke
State Secretary Senior Government Counsellor
in the Reich and Prussian Ministry of the Interior

Munich and Berlin 1936

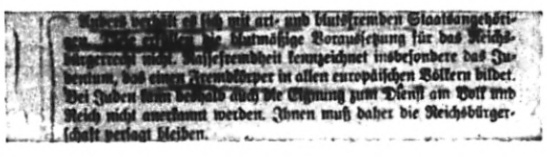
"The highest aim of the folkish state is the maintenance and continuance of the folk formed by physically and mentally similar human beings. Since the blood-value of a folk is determined by the race which gives that folk its character, the conservation and improvement of the blood-value is only possible through racial culture". (p. 7)



"The National Socialist leadership of the state believes unshakeably that it is acting in the spirit of the Almighty Creator in making the attempt to express again, in the state-folk order of the Third Reich, the eternal laws of life and nature which control and determine the fate of the individual and community, as far as this can be done by the imperfect means at the disposal of human beings." (p. 9)



"The two Nuremberg Laws, together with the regulations based upon them, contain the basic solution for this racial problem. They bring about a clear distinction between Germanness and Jewishness, based on blood, and thus provide the legal basis for a modus vivendi for all needs. Their basic importance consists in the fact that they prevent, for all time, the penetration of further Jewish blood into the German folk-body." (p. 15)



"The position is different with nationals of the state who are alien by type or blood. These people do not fulfil the blood-conditions for the right to be Reich Citizens. Alien race is a mark particularly of the Jews, who form an alien body in all European nations. The right to service for the folk and the Reich cannot be recognised in the case of Jews. They must therefore be refused recognition as Reich Citizens." (p. 28)

DOWN A SALT MINE

By Allen Mann

Several weeks ago I landed in the salt mines of the GDR — and then returned to tell the tale. I spent only a few hours there, in fact, and was clad, not in chains or stripes, but in clean white work clothes, big boots and a white helmet reserved for visitors. The trip was harmless, but an interesting adventure nonetheless.

The mine I descended, one of a group of pits and processing plants which have been combined into one big nationally-owned trust, was deep in the green mountains of western Thuringia, almost within hailing distance of the West German frontier.

After climbing to the top floor of one of the countless buildings in the big complex, I was given a miner's lamp and shown into the double-storeyed "cage" or lift, which plunged to the bottom of the mine over 1500 feet below the surface. I got out — and looked around in some surprise.

This was certainly different from the coal mine I had once visited. There was a brightness here from fluorescent lamps whose light was reflected from the light grey and pink salt walls. The salt was not for eating, however; this was a potash mine, and although its by-products included bromium for films and many other chemicals, the main goals for all these tons of salt are the fields of the GDR, Britain, Japan and 35 other countries, where it is used as a very important fertiliser, assuring healthy growth to potatoes, sugar beets, grain, tomatoes and hothouse products.

Now another surprise awaited me. With several other visitors, I climbed into an open truck for a swift, smooth two mile drive down one of the mine's main highways — a road carved from salt whose traffic consisted of trucks, hurtling motorcycles and even an occasional leisurely bicycle. At our right, for the whole length of the trip, rattled a series of long conveyor belts carrying salt back towards the mine shaft.

Most noticeable, aside from the brightness, was the pungent, almost acrid quality of the air. The miner next to me, my guide for the visit, assured me that the potash air would rid me of any cold I might have. "It even cures the whooping cough," he said. "For three years now we have had a special children's room one level higher in the mine, with a hobby horse, toys and picture books. Doctors in this area send children with whooping cough down here for several hours a week. It works wonders with the kids — in fact, I suspect that they sometimes get sick on purpose just so they can descend our mine."

Our truck reached its destination, and we climbed out and wandered through a labyrinth of caverns, wide passages and smaller "stalls" or tunnels. In each one of these long "stalls", two men bored holes deep into the salt, filled them with explosives and hooked them to one big cable. After everyone had left the mine at the end of a shift, a long series of explosions blasted the daily quota of approximately 11,000 tons of salt loose from the walls. The next shift cleared this away with big scrapers and brought it to the long conveyor belts. Except for handling the explosives, all the work I saw was done with machinery. This fact, and the lack of coal dust and grime, made the job of these miners seem just a bit less awe-inspiring and more like other jobs.

Returning by truck to the main shaft, we found that the salt was collected in two big bunkers, whose fullness was checked by an isotope device, until its turn came to go to the surface. Near the bunkers was a small chamber carved out of the salt walls. In it a very nonchalant-looking young man sat in front of a complicated table with lights, arrows buttons and telephones, which he occasionally pressed or spoke into. This was the "brain" of this section of mine, controlling all the belts and responsible for smooth and continuous operations from the pit to the main shaft. The young fellow in charge, I was surprised to find, was neither a manager nor a highly-trained mining engineer, but a young miner who had just "grown up" with the new equipment, which was being installed in one section of the mine after another. Everyone I met at the mine spoke of this modernising process, which would continue till about 1970. In 1963 the huge trust, which covers an area of 25 square miles and employs 8,500 people, is already producing twice what it turned out in 1938, the best pre-war year, and by the early 70's, with full modernisation and automation, it will produce three times as much.

Before 1945 the mines were owned by the huge Wintershall company, which helped Germany dominate the whole world market before World War One. After German defeat in 1918, the concern lost its mines in Alsace, which was returned to France, but it determined to maintain its domination of world sales by underbidding its competitors. The huge new mine it built here was part of this attempt.

Wintershall made bigger profits than ever, but was never satisfied. It feared its workers, who began to organise and demand their rights; it also wanted the old Alsatian mines back; and it wanted an even larger portion of the world market. To gain all these ends, the heads of the firm backed Hitler and contributed huge sums to Himmler's special SS fund. They were repaid with huge profits, which increased when war began.

In addition, the nazis allotted them war prisoners, including over one hundred British soldiers who worked in the mine — and prisoners from Buchenwald concentration camp, who were kept day and night below the surface until they died or were finally liberated on Easter Day 1945.

When American troops arrived in the mine village, they found something more interesting than the prisoners. Not only had the nazis stored many valuable paintings and whole libraries of precious books in the mine, they had also hidden a large part of the German gold treasure in its bomb-proof tunnels. Miners told me that General Eisenhower himself had stayed in the village to supervise its removal.

After a few months of US occupation, Soviet troops moved into this part of Germany, which had been allotted to the Soviet Occupation Zone, and the days of the Wintershall Company were ended here. Today the mine is named after Ernst Thaelmann, the German Communist leader who was killed by the nazis at Buchenwald.

The big modernisation schedule in the mines here is extremely important to the GDR, for potash is one of its very few natural resources and potash fertilisers represent a major export product. Its very large sales to Britain, for example, enable the GDR to buy many products of British industry and have been a key basis for improving trade relations between the two countries. The potash exports have been important for Britain, too, for until they began in the early 1950's, the British firm of Potash Ltd.

had a monopoly on sales of the fertiliser, which it obtained from West Germany, France and Spain. When GDR potash entered the field, Potash Ltd. was forced to grant substantial rebates to its customers. A report by the Monopolies Commission to the British House of Commons in 1959 stated that "the principal effect of the rebates has been to reduce the average net selling price of potash in order to meet East German competition. Both the competition and Potash Ltd.'s reaction to it are to be welcomed." In other words, streamlined production in the GDR potash mines has kept prices down in Britain.

In evidence given to the Monopolies Commission, Potash Ltd. tried to explain its higher prices by claiming that "social conditions in East Germany may result in the labour cost of potash being lower than that obtaining in ... France, West Germany and Spain." The claim that social conditions in Spain are better than in the GDR is rather breathtaking; but what are the facts?

I found part of the answer in the pleasant canteen I visited after emerging from the mine. It will soon be turned into a subsidised, inexpensive restaurant for all employees. I found that over 1500 of the plant's employees spend their holidays in vacation homes belonging to the potash trust which are scattered through the pleasantest parts of the country. Many hundreds are helped to arrange trips to the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria, Rumania or the Soviet Union and to tourist areas in other socialist countries, and twenty-five workers a year get tickets for ocean cruises on one of the GDR's two trade union owned luxury liners. Holidays for mine employees vary, according to job and seniority, from two to three and a half weeks for above-ground workers, and from three weeks to a month for those working down in the pits.

Then, 100 to 150 miners every year are sent for health spa treatments, many of them of a purely preventive nature, but all with the best of treatment and free of charge, with pocket money and allotments for the families while the miner is away. Medical examinations are thorough and frequent, and large sums are spent to construct new clinics, as well as schools, shops and cultural centres in the hundred mountain villages and towns where the employees' homes are scattered. Large sums are also spent on schooling and training courses of all kinds, and miners are constantly urged to continue their education at little or no cost with every advantage and prospect of advancement the mine can offer.

But what interested me most were the provisions for safety, probably the first concern of every miner. Before the war there were many accidents in potash mines due to carbon dioxide "eruptions". A group of scientists was granted a half-million marks by the GDR Government to study such catastrophes, and it was able to work out a successful plan which not only controls the problem but channels the "eruptions" in a way beneficial to the mine.

In 1958, a section of one mine collapsed, and there were six fatal casualties. Here, too, a special government commission was immediately set up to prevent recurrences of the tragedy. The scientists decided that the huge "pillars of salt" left unhewn as supports in the mine should be 125 feet thick instead of the former 32 foot thickness. This rule is now required in all GDR potash mines, although it means a 30% sacrifice of valuable salt. Such measures and constant painstaking reports and analyses of every injury or possible cause of injury — up to and including family troubles — have cut accidents to a minimum; from January to March there had not been a single even mildly serious accident among the 8,500 employees — an achievement which won them a special government award for safe conditions.

Another worry of many miners in other countries is retirement. The provisions for miners in the GDR are that after 15 years at underground work miners receive a partial pension, usually between 200 and 300 marks a month, which is already higher than almost all other old-age pensions in the GDR. At the age of 60 they get their full monthly pension — at least 600 marks and averaging 700 to 800 marks, which is itself a good wage anywhere in the GDR, not to speak of a pension. These amounts are paid out even if the miner continues working, on top of his regular pay. In this and many other respects, miners are the most favoured category of workers in the GDR — as they of rights should be, I think.

This "double payment" to miners over 60 — and the attempts to keep them, at lighter jobs if need be — points up one of the serious problems faced by the potash mines. As the plants grow, the manpower shortage makes itself felt more and more, especially since Germany's very sparse age groups born between 1945 and 1950 are now reaching working age. That means scouting further and further into the mountains on the lookout for men who might be interested in working here; it also means improving roads and railways so they can get to work, building thousands of new homes, and in general making the job attractive enough to hire them and then keep them here. Most important, it means mechanising and automating quickly enough to make up for manpower shortages, a very expensive programme which is proceeding according to the careful plan mentioned earlier.

Then there is another problem which is equally typical of the GDR economy. When the American troops left this area in 1945, most of the top managers left with them and took up work in the West German plants, managements and laboratories of the huge Wintershall Company. This left a big gap. Not only that, but over the years the concern kept in close touch with many members of the lower managerial or technical staff whose loyalty it could somehow preserve. At irregular intervals, but usually at critical moments, it enticed one or more of them across the border (or through West Berlin) with the offer of well-paying jobs, luxurious homes or other advantages in West Germany.

The only answer to this was to send more and more miners to be trained at the GDR's big Mining School or other institutions. At present, I was told, none of the old Wintershall staff remained in important positions. As my miner-guide told me in parting, "Every management job here now from lowest foreman up to the director of the whole trust is filled by a man who once worked as a miner. That has meant lots of problems, where the new people didn't have the experience of the old Wintershall men. But we are over many of our earlier headaches, and as an old-timer here, I can tell you that there's a big difference in working in our own mine. We're solving all our problems, one after the other, and that means we are turning out more and more potash every year."

New Steel Project

Work has just begun on a huge steel rolling mill to be constructed on the Oder River 50 miles east of Berlin. The new rolling mill, which will form part of the Eisenhüttenstadt complex, a new steel centre entirely built since 1950, will process 1.7 million tons of steel annually when it is completed in four years time.

BERLIN NOTEBOOK

One of our readers in Britain, responding to appeals for silly newspaper articles about the German Democratic Republic, has provided me with a couple of very jolly ones. Reporter N. R. Stockton, writing in the Ulster "Belfast News-Letter" of May 9th, reaches a record of fatuity with the following description of East Berlin:

"What food there is in the meat and fruit line we in Ireland would not eat ourselves but give to the dogs ... In the broad streets and squares children begged cigarettes from me ... (a doctor told me) the lack of food and the poor quality of that which was available had resulted in widespread disease ... I went to East Germany only half believing the stories printed about it, but with this country no political exaggeration is necessary. Life is too short to go without food no matter how important the political ideal."

Verboten

The second quotation, from an article by reporter Charles Quant in the "Liverpool Daily Post" of May 14th is not quite so juicy:

"I toured East Berlin as far as I was permitted — and that is not very far, for even to visit the areas behind the towering facades or workers' flats is strictly verboten. It is not permitted to see the full inactivity behind that facade, for it is as false as the clapboard frontages of the streets in a Wild West cow town."

Now I don't want to answer these weird reports in detail myself, but I must just remark that this story about parts of East Berlin being off limits to foreign visitors is pure baloney.

Instead of giving my own possibly intemperate reply to Mr Stockton and Mr Quant, let me just quote you some paragraphs from an article entitled "The Other Side of the Wall", published in "The Times" of London on June 4th. Then you can pay your money and take your choice:

"In West Berlin everyone tried his best to make me nervous. I was regaled with good advice on what foodstuffs I should take to avoid starvation, and similar earnest admonitions normally reserved for travellers to Outer Mongolia. So when I crossed into East Berlin by the S-Bahn I was thoroughly conditioned. The Koestleresque atmosphere of the underground control point at Friedrichstrasse heightened the sensation. But an hour later I was sitting in a modern and clean express train, rolling through the neat familiar German countryside towards Dresden.

"Our West German friends need not have worried. Food was reasonable in price, portions generous, and the choice wide. I ate in some grade four restaurants where a four-course dinner might be about 17s. 6d., but for that one would get better value than at the same price in England. I also had meals in cheaper restaurants and in an office canteen, where I paid 1s. 3d. for stew, spinach and buttered potatoes ...

"A room in a modern hotel in Dresden, with telephone and service, was only 12s. 6d. a night ...

"One could soon see why reports about the country are so contradictory, in relation to living standards and real wages alone. The journalist who penetrates no farther than the Alexanderplatz thinks that shops are lifeless, offer no choice, and charge exhorbitant prices. I admit that the H.O. store in Berlin is less exciting than the KADEWE on the Kurfürstendamm.

Comparable

"But towns like Halle, Magdeburg or Rostock have shops which offer at least as much variety as comparable places in England; the foodshops are often cleaner and in some trades (books, glass, ceramics, optical instruments, toys) variety and quality are probably well above British level."

I would like to break into the "Times" report at this point to offer the comment that the journalist writing the article appears to be suffering from "over-compensation"; he is so astonished that things are not so grey as he had been told that he tends to see them rather brighter than they really are. Having compared the two a week or so ago, I must say I think that good shops in a British provincial town still offer a better and certainly a more colourful range of goods than shops in GDR cities; the gap is closing, but it is still there. But now back to "The Times":

"Basic foodstuffs, rents, fares and simple clothing are all so cheap that they must offset, for lower income groups, the undoubtedly excessive prices of some categories of goods ...

"West German television stations near the border and in (West) Berlin especially put out something that is designed to make every East German feel envious, imprisoned and rebellious ... One soon finds that those who oppose the regime have a distorted view of what they miss. West of the Harz, California begins. Everyone is rich, happy, drives a Mercedes to the Riviera, culture and learning flourish. One old lady I visited has arthritis, thinks that no drugs produced in her country could help her, but a fortnight in a Black Forest spa would cure her ...

Grumbling

"In spite of frustration, isolation and much grumbling, ordinary life goes on. At the students' post-examination ball good food was eaten and a very palatable Hungarian wine circulated. The young danced (the Twist), wore Abraham Lincoln ties, sang sarcastic songs about their professors and discussed the high price of nylons (18s. a pair upwards). Some engineers were apprehensive about the future: a crash programme of technical education has produced an over-supply of applied science graduates, far more than the small state can employ ... The desperate shortage is at the artisan level; when you make every intelligent plumber or locksmith into a graduate engineer you soon produce the type of domestic predicament in bathrooms, and the drabness of housefronts, that so deceive the casual visitor ...

"This is not a poor and backward state; this is still the Germany of Weimar. The East Germans are still awake, their minds active, their hands skilled. It should not be beyond the wit of man to devise some means whereby at least the pre-1961 status can be restored."

As I said above, you can pay your money and take your choice; I certainly do not agree with all the judgments made by "The Times" correspondent, but it is a pleasant change to find someone who has made a real effort to see the GDR before rushing into print.

I must now hurry home; my lunch is waiting. The dogs in Belfast must be very fat if they all get the sort of meal which I am sure is awaiting me.

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